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EXPERIENCE

The impact of medication synchronization on quality care criteria in an independent community pharmacy

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To determine the impact of a comprehensive medication synchronization program in an independent community pharmacy by (1) evaluating changes in Electronic Quality Improvement Platform for Plans and Pharmacies (EQuIPP) scores and (2) examining the change in monthly prescription volume.

Setting: Independent community pharmacy in Morgantown, WV.

Practice innovation: Waterfront Family Pharmacy is a single-location independent community pharmacy located in Morgantown, WV. The pharmacy consists of four full-time pharmacists and is the primary practice site for one community pharmacy PGY-1 resident. The pharmacy provides a variety of clinical services, including vaccine administration, medication therapy management, and diabetes education services.

Practice innovation: In September 2014, Waterfront Family Pharmacy started a comprehensive medication synchronization program.

Evaluation: Change in Electronic Quality Improvement Platform for Plans and Pharmacies (EQuIPP) scores and change in monthly prescription volume.

Results: At the end of 6 months there was improvement in all targeted EQuIPP scores. There was a 7% improvement in proportion of days covered (PDC) for cholesterol-reducing agents, a 9.5% improvement in PDC for oral glycemic agents, a 1.2% improvement in PDC for renin-angiotensin system antagonists, and a 1.8% reduction in the use of high-risk medications in the elderly. There was also an average increase in monthly prescription volume of 4.8% over the first 6 months after the implementation of the comprehensive medication synchronization program.

Conclusion: The implementation of a comprehensive medication synchronization program in an independent community pharmacy may result in benefits including improved EQuIPP scores and increased prescription volume.

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Article relevance and contribution to literature

Current literature supports that the implementation of medication synchronization services in chain community pharmacies increases patient adherence and persistence to

chronic medications.^{1,2} Patients have also been found to be highly satisfied with medication synchronization services in chain community pharmacies.³ Compared with independent community pharmacies, chain pharmacies typically have greater financial resources and the support of a large network of pharmacies to assist them in implementing additional services into the dispensing workflow. There are software packages available to assist community pharmacies in organizing medication synchronization programs and integrating the program into the dispensing workflow, but the cost of these systems can be a financial burden on independent pharmacy owners.

The present project focuses on the impact of implementing a comprehensive medication synchronization program in an independent community pharmacy with a single location.

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Key Points**Background:**

- Current literature shows that medication synchronization services result in improvements in patient persistence and adherence to chronic medications.
- Current literature focuses on medication synchronization services that have been implemented in chain community pharmacy environments.
- There is a current need for research regarding medication synchronization in independent community pharmacies, which may have different resources available for service implementation than chain community pharmacies.

Findings:

- Waterfront Family Pharmacy saw an improvement in EQuIPP scores, which measure CMS quality measures, 6 months after implementation of the comprehensive medication synchronization program.
- Waterfront Family Pharmacy saw an increase in monthly prescription volume after implementation of the comprehensive medication synchronization program.

No medication synchronization software packages were used to initiate or operate the service. The impact on quality-based health care outcomes and monthly prescription volume were evaluated to determine the impact of this program on the pharmacy and its patients.

Introduction

As the United States moves away from a fee-for-service model and toward a quality-based outcomes health care model, it becomes even more important that community pharmacies develop initiatives to improve patient outcomes and measure those outcomes. The Electronic Quality Improvement Platform for Plans and Pharmacies (EQuIPP) is a Web-based platform that provides pharmacies and health plans with unbiased benchmarked pharmacy performance data based on Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Star Rating criteria goals.⁴ Health plans are reimbursed under the new health care model based on health quality and performance measures. As a result, health plans are under significant pressure to increase their CMS Star Ratings and may encourage pharmacies to increase a health plan's Star Ratings by including them in preferred pharmacy networks and providing financial incentives, including direct reimbursement or reduced direct and indirect remuneration fees.⁵

Medication synchronization is one way in which pharmacies can improve health outcomes for their patients. Existing data show that medication synchronization programs enhance patient adherence and persistence in chain community pharmacies.^{1,2} Such programs also have benefits to patients such as reduced visits to the pharmacy, reduced number of out-of-stock medication situations, and better maintenance by

pharmacies to maintain an active medication list to improve clinical service opportunities.⁶

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate the impact of implementing a comprehensive medication synchronization program in an independent community pharmacy.

Setting

Waterfront Family Pharmacy (WFP) is an independent community pharmacy locally owned by 2 pharmacists in Morgantown, WV. The pharmacy's co-owners serve as full-time staff pharmacists. There are also 2 additional full-time staff pharmacists at the site, and the pharmacy employs approximately 5 full-time-equivalent (FTE) technicians. WFP is the primary practice site for a PGY1 Community Pharmacy Practice resident and hosts introductory and advanced practice experience students. The pharmacy fills approximately 1500 prescriptions per week. It is attached to an urgent care facility and receives a high proportion of acute care prescriptions. Despite this high average volume of acute care prescriptions, WFP has a consistent patient base that receives medications for chronic disease states. The staff, including pharmacists, technicians, and interns, are highly motivated and have a high level of buy-in for clinical services to improve patient outcomes.

WFP also provides patient care services. They administer all immunizations allowed within the pharmacist scope of practice in the state of West Virginia. During flu season they provide influenza vaccines on site for local businesses. WFP uses Outcomes MTM and Mirixa Web-based platforms to provide medication therapy management services. The pharmacy participates in a state-sponsored diabetes education program in which pharmacists receive compensation for providing patient appointments, diabetes education, and therapeutic recommendations.

Practice innovation

On September 9, 2014, WFP implemented a comprehensive medication synchronization program. This service is available to all patients of the pharmacy and is marketed as "Waterfront Auto-Monthly Refills (WARF)." To advertise the service, marketing materials were developed and placed in the pharmacy, including posters on the front door and in the counseling room. Flyers were also made available on the check-out counter and placed in prescription bags at the point of sale. The pharmacy also used point-of-care system reports to identify patients with potential adherence issues to targeted medications, including oral glycemic control agents and renin-angiotensin system antagonists (RASAs). These reports were used to target patients who may benefit from the medication synchronization program. When a patient was identified, a clinical note would be placed in the dispensing software. A pharmacist would subsequently talk to the patient in person at their next pharmacy encounter regarding the benefits of the medication synchronization program.

On enrollment, patients completed a 1-page form that updated their contact information, allergy information, and vaccination history. Patients also signed a consent form that was kept on file in the pharmacy.

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